

Session 9 Harmony of the Gospels

INTRODUCTION

Jesus comes to Nazareth again. It's His second visit to Nazareth. He hadn't been there for twelve months. It's been a whole year since He was there. Last time He was there in Luke 4, He had a pretty hard time. He's coming back again, but they receive Him this time.

His reputation of being a faith healer all throughout Galilee has been spreading. It's interesting to compare the reaction of this little town the first time and the next time they allowed Him to teach in the synagogue. I wouldn't have thought they would have given Him a second chance. His reputation was much stronger in the area, so they thought they would give Him a shot.

“A PROPHET IS NOT WITHOUT HONOR EXCEPT IN HIS OWN COUNTRY”

Verse 4. Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor except in his own country . . . and in his own house” (Mk. 6:4). “A prophet always has honor until he goes home,” is what He's saying.

This is a really important point: we must always seek to receive and recognize everyone among us in the way that God sees them. It's a really tough thing to do. We must learn to recognize men for who the Holy Ghost has made them to be without any reference to their natural ability or their natural inability. We look at people who maybe don't have that much ability in the natural, but God has called them to be a prophet. Right here at South County, God just may be calling any of you to be an apostle or prophet. We think, “That guy isn't the president of a corporation. He has this job or that job. You have to be kidding!”

God calls men like that. He calls fishermen to be apostles. They're the foundations of the Church. He writes their name on the cornerstones in heaven. Fishermen and tax collectors—those kinds of guys.

It's a tricky thing. We don't recognize any man any longer after the flesh, but after the spirit (1 Cor. 5:16). We don't look at what a man has accomplished or his ability, but what God has made him to be to the Body of Christ. Even if he's a really odd brother, it makes no difference. I don't look at his abilities anymore or what he was or wasn't in the natural. This attitude will ensure that we benefit from every prophet that's in our midst, or any kind of gift ministry from God.

It's too easy to view each other carnally, and we miss the blessing of God on that person. This requires an honest, humble heart before God, instead of a self-seeking, envious heart of pride. This attitude is difficult, yet it will bring a great blessing if you can submit to it. Be sure to heed the warning in Matthew 10:41; it says, “If you receive a righteous man, you'll receive the benefit of the righteous man. If you receive the prophet, you'll receive the blessing of the prophet” (Mt. 10:41, paraphrased). You'll receive the anointed blessing of a man only to the degree that you receive that man.

Jesus, when He ascended into heaven, was worshiped as the Messiah. When Jesus went to Nazareth, He was Joe's kid. That's all they got out of Him. He could have built a few cabinets, and that was the greatest blessing they could have from Him. Yet when He goes to heaven, He's heralded as the greatest One ever. They only got the benefit as they received Him.

Let's talk about Marty. Marty is a really zealous, gifted young man. What if Marty is twenty-one years old and God has singled him out to be an apostle to the nations, but he hasn't developed that yet and he's at South County Fellowship? But we're not aware of what he's been set apart in his womb to be. He's just that guy who runs the children's church. We say, "Hi, how ya doin', Brother Marty?" What if God has His mark on his heart and he's in the process of being one of the greatest men who has lived on the earth? As he comes forth, he's just good old Marty to us now. That's the sort of thing I was thinking of. What if he's that? As he emerges in this ministry, we had better receive it. That means a lot of us elders moving out of the way and letting him function as one of the most anointed men that walked on the earth. Or else we reject him and he has to go somewhere else to bring his anointing.

We have to be on our toes constantly. Any one of you could be a budding Paul the apostle and you don't even know it yourself yet. Right here in our own midst, we have to be very careful not to have pride in our heart, and let someone overtake us and take over the church and go forward and bring us into things that no one here can bring us into right now. Maybe the guy is going to get saved in the youth meeting next Saturday night and he's the next Paul to America. What are we going to do with this guy? Are we going to kick him out so he can minister, or are we going to receive him and everyone move out of the way and let him be that to us? I think that's just a really, really serious thing; and the eldership especially must take it to heart.

HE COULD DO NO MIRACLES THERE, BECAUSE OF THEIR UNBELIEF

Verses 5-6. He could do no miracles there. Why? Matthew tells us, because of their unbelief (Mt. 13:58). I wonder at the unbelief in light of all the things they've heard about in the last twelve months. I can't imagine them having unbelief. They could just not kick into gear that Joe's kid was something more than Joe's kid. When He came to minister, He couldn't do anything. That's a heavy principle.

ANSWER:

Jesus marveled at the faith of the centurion and He marveled at the unbelief of His own people. He wondered at it (Mt. 9:35). This is what happens immediately after He leaves Nazareth. He goes on His third Galilean tour. He goes throughout all the cities and villages teaching in the synagogues, proclaiming the Gospel. The twelve were with Him this time, healing all kinds of diseases.

"But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd" (Mt. 9:36).

Here in the notes, we find that another word for *compassion* is *love*. Love is what releases faith. Galatians 5:6 says that faith works through love. The motivation of delivering people instead of making your own kingdom is what causes faith to be mature. It's miles apart from laying hands on people so you can have an anointed ministry and gain respect from men. Having a deep inward motivation of delivering afflicted people is worlds apart. One heart can't move in faith, even though it has all the knowledge of the Word in him. The other part can move in revelation because God will give it to him.

I think it's interesting to note the compassion and love that Jesus walked in. He said to His disciples, "The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest" (Mt. 9:37-38). The opportunities are abundant. The harvest is plentiful. There are so many places in South County that need anointed ministry. The harvest is not the problem. The Father has much work to do. The Father works until now and Jesus works alongside Him (Jn. 5:17). The Father has a lot of work to do

in South County. It's not that God has no desire to release His power, but workers who pay the price to walk at a high level of faith and obedience comes so rarely. He says, "They come so few, the people I can use."

Opportunities are there, God's desire is there, the power is there, but the men and women who ascend to God at that level who can be called real coworkers with God are so few. Prayer-filled, faith-filled, Spirit-led, wholly disciplined, wholly dedicated people, are so rare. I'm talking about the level of consecration of Paul the apostle. I know I'm not walking in that.

Jesus said, "Hey, the problem isn't that I'm unwilling. It's just that people are unwilling to pay the price." Do you know what it is called? Hating your life. I don't know too many people who hate their life compared to their love for Him. It's easy to say, hard to do. Anointed co-workers with God that God personally sent out are few. God has personally put His hand on them and anointed them.

The solution? Pray for more people to be full of revelation, enabled to move in power. Jesus said, "Here's what you do: pray for them."

Ephesians 1:17 gives us the prayer. Pray that they'll be filled with revelation so that the power that works within them will come out of them. Paul was an example of a sent-out coworker with God. That's my idea of people who were few—guys like Paul. He was a pretty heavy example. He had serious dedication to obedience and faith.

That's what Jesus is referring to. He isn't saying, "Who wants to be in full-time ministry?" Then only one guy would raise His hand. But the men who would be coworkers with God are so few. The road is narrow, and few go that way.

He's going to send the twelve out. So far Jesus has completed three tours of Galilee. The twelve had been with Him on two of those three tours. He's going to send them out on their first assignment without Him actually being there. This is the first big assignment. This is only fourteen months before He was to permanently leave them. "It's about time I send them out now." They had been ordained for about six months as official disciples. Still, this is two-and-three-quarter years after His baptism and after He called Peter. He's known these guys for almost three years and hasn't sent them out yet.

He says, "Now is the time. I have fourteen months. I have to start getting them out on their own to get the feel of what's going on here."

He gives them authority. God will give His authority to any coworker who will live like these men lived.

DON'T MAKE DEMANDS OR UNGODLY APPEALS FOR FINANCE

He says, "Don't acquire money" (Mt. 10:9, paraphrased). Don't take money. I would like to see that on someone's stationary. The man who will maintain his anointing is one who will stay totally pure in finances. A lot of men get an anointing, but so few keep it throughout their lives because they get impure with finances. "Don't make demands or ungodly appeals for finance," is the spirit of what He's saying. Today it's a little different; there are airfares and you have to pay it. They walked back then. The spirit of what He's saying is that making money a very secondary issue in what you're doing.

I'm going to write that thing on my heart. I think that's really an important thing right here if we're going to lay hold of God and maintain that hold.

“Now whatever city or town you enter, inquire who in it is worthy, and stay there till you go out” (Mt. 10:11). In other words, if you're going to a new town, identify with men who have notable, proven, righteous reputations. Identification with these consistently righteous men will move suspicion when you go to a new area until you're trusted and known. It's just a wise principle. If you're going to a new city, get with someone whom the people have known, who has been consistently righteous in the eyes of many. Go in the store and say, “Who is a righteous man in the city?” Whoever they name, if he has a reputation for righteousness, try and tag up with that guy and you have a much greater advantage right there until people know you.

I think that's the spirit of what He's saying. There's real wisdom in that if you have a ministry of traveling around.

MUCH HASSLE BESETS THE PURE OF HEART BECAUSE THEY DON'T HAVE WISDOM

Verse 16. He's just giving these guys instructions before He sends them out. “Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves” (Mt. 10:16). Ministry needs wisdom and purity—not just purity, but wisdom. One without the other will put you at a disadvantage. Purity without wisdom won't be as effective. Lack of wisdom provokes much unnecessary persecution. Much hassle comes to the pure of heart because they don't have any wisdom. A lot of people get persecuted, not because of righteousness, but because they don't have wisdom to know what to do, when to be quiet, when to go here, and what to attack and what not to attack, and when to press in and when not to.

We've all been focused on innocence and purity, and that's certainly good. That's a good thing. I feel like the real thrust of this is to have wisdom when you go, and you'll save yourself a lot of unnecessary hassle. I've been in so many hassles because of my lack of wisdom in my venture to minister to people. I look back and it was just plain, old, zealous lack of wisdom. Just remember that.

BEWARE OF LETTING OTHERS MANIPULATE YOUR ANOINTING

Verse 17. He tells you to beware of men. It's men manipulating your anointing. Because men will always seek, when an anointed man comes around, to manipulate it to use it to their end. Then they'll harm you in the end. They're after their own gain. Beware of anyone when the anointing of God comes forth in a greater measure. Everyone wants to use it to their advantage.

Jesus knew the hearts of men; He wouldn't give Himself to men. He knew what was in their hearts (Jn. 2:24-25). “No way am I letting them have any kind of input into what My movements are going to be.” Jesus wouldn't be manipulated by men, although He had a submissive spirit. Beware. It doesn't mean be rebellious; just be aware.

PERSECUTION DOESN'T GET HEAVY UNTIL YOU GET ANOINTED

When you get anointed at a higher level, persecution always happens. You don't have to worry about heavy persecution until you have power. He's telling you that they'll kill you. No question. Intimate relationships will stand against you. If you're really serious about faith and obedience, and really serious about raising the dead, be really serious about losing your family. I really mean that. Sometimes you don't have to, but they don't go together. The price that you'll pay for anointing, for unblamable integrity and righteousness, is that you'll cause

waves everywhere you go, because you won't fit in well in most elderships—let alone the body and ungodly homes. If you want to be a miracle-worker, be prepared to say goodbye to your family. I'm not saying you will. If you have a Christian family that loves God, no problem. If they don't, they'll mock you and hate you. They'll say goodbye to you, not you to them. You might as well be prepared if you really want to go the distance. Persecution doesn't get heavy until you get anointed.

“WHEN THEY PERSECUTE YOU IN THIS CITY, FLEE TO ANOTHER”

Verse 23. “When they persecute you in this city, flee to another. For assuredly, I say to you, you will not have gone through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes” (Mt. 10:23). He says, “Don't stay there and get beaten up! Go to the next city.” Jesus always fled when they were going to persecute Him until the Father said to stay. Don't be a hero unless God tells you to stay there. Just remember some of these principles.

My favorite verses here are verses 24 and 25. “A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they call those of his household” (Mt. 10:24-25)!

If they persecuted Jesus, they'll persecute you. If Jesus had to submit to a disciplined lifestyle and if He had to submit to persecution, then if we want to move in the anointing that He moved in, we have to do so as well. You can't have His power without His persecution and discipline, or you would be greater than He is. I just think we really need to count the cost for anointing before we can get it. It becomes a sober thing to deliver men. The idea of glitter, a lot of money, TV shows, white shoes, and big Bibles, is just unrealistic as far as I'm concerned. The real stuff is going to be a big hassle, but you're in it because you want to deliver humanity that's suffering. It is worth the hassle to deliver suffering people. You'll never get the glory and credit for it if you're really pressing in. You can't keep the gold; you can't retain honor; you have to live in prayer, fasting, and intercession. It's not necessarily the most glorious lifestyle in the natural. Those are things we need to be aware of.

YOUR RIGHTEOUS MOTIVES WILL BE MANIFESTED OPENLY IN THE LAST DAY

“Therefore do not fear them. For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known” (Mt. 10:26).

Jesus used this proverb three times in three settings in three different locations for three different meanings. He used it another time when He was talking about faith teaching and the parables about the Word—to hear it, to believe it, and to pray that God would unveil more to you. Here He's talking about persecution. It's the same proverb He used in Mark 4:22. Don't fear, because in eternity God will vindicate you. Don't fear them. He will openly reveal you as being righteous and right, and He will reveal them as being wrong in front of all the angels in the last day. Don't worry about them. Let them persecute you. God will reveal the whole thing in the end. All their envy, etc. will be exposed on that day.

A lot of “religious,” spiritual men will be persecuting you. God will openly manifest their motivation in front of all people in the last day. Don't worry about it. Just press in and don't fight them. He'll show what's what in the last day. Your righteous motives will be manifested openly in that day. We need to see the reality of eternal values when we walk in the high anointing that brings such a great persecution. Eternal values need to be driving our hearts, or we will wane and go backwards when the persecution starts.

Maybe I talked some of you out the anointing. You say, “I think that’s for you guys. I think I would rather show up at the meeting, have the glory cloud appear, have a few good prophecies, have a good time, and let you guys get beat up.”

He’s encouraging them that in the last day they’ll be vindicated. He says, “What I tell you in the dark, speak in the light. What you hear whispered in your ear, in the place of prayer proclaim upon the housetops.” This is all in the context of persecution. “I will speak to you things in the darkness, in the prayer time. I will say, ‘That guy is unrighteous, that guy is living adulterously, and you stand up and speak it out.’”

He says, “You proclaim loudly what I whisper in your ear in private.” If you want to go for this prophetic ministry, then go all the way. I’m one of those guys who want to prophesy blessing, but you’ll never prophesy blessing until you’ve been faithful in speaking and counseling and confrontation, the real stuff.

He says, “Don’t fear.” He’s still talking about persecution. They can kill your body. Don’t worry about it, because they can’t kill your soul. Jesus had to practice what He preached in this.

In verse 21, He promised you would be killed. In verse 28, He says, “Don’t worry about it” (Mt. 10:28, paraphrased). He doesn’t say, “Don’t worry about being killed.” He says, “Don’t be worried about being destroyed, because you need to have an eternal value system or you’ll never make it in this system anyway.”

When I first read that and it dawned on me, I thought, “Don’t fear. Praise God. It seems to contradict what He said a minute ago.”

He said, “No, I didn’t say I wouldn’t have you beat up and stoned and thrown in jail. That’s not what ‘don’t fear’ means; it just means you’ll not end up in hell like they will.”

YOU ARE OF MORE VALUE THAN MANY SPARROWS

Then He goes on in verses 29-30 and talks about how specifically and intimately interested God is in your life. He knows every hair on your head. He knows every minute detail. He knows what you’re going through and meets every need. You won’t necessarily receive deliverance from the beating, but the grace of God will be on you. He says, “Don’t fear.”

He says this three or four times. He knew what He was telling these guys. They thought, “Fear, us? We’re full of faith.”

He says, “Well just remember that in seven verses I said ‘Don’t fear’ three times. Remember that.”

You’re of more value than many sparrows. When you confess Jesus Christ in these terrible situations where it’s very unpopular to do it, before God and the holy angels on the last day, Jesus will stand and declare your name openly if you declare His.

Take courage. He says, “It *is* going to be tough. It is going to be tough to declare My name.”

It’s easier for a lot of people to say, “Lord, I’m not interested in the miraculous.”

A lot of men, I'm convinced, when it came down to the wire, backed off of it because it wasn't worth the pain and the hassle of staying hold of God and staying motivated. You have to live rightly before God if you're going to stand before those courts like Paul did. He got whipped and beaten up for it. There's no question that Jesus will stand up and own up to Paul on the last day. He says to the Father, "He's on My side."

LIFE IS SOBER AND ETERNAL, WHETHER WE LIKE IT OR NOT

He says, "If you deny Me before men, when you appear before My Father, I'll say I don't know you" (Mt. 10:32-33, paraphrased). I wish there was some nice, charismatic way to make that easier. I'm convinced that He means what He says. I'm convinced that life is more serious than we think it is. I'm convinced that it's sober and eternal, whether we like it or not. There are real ultimatums that we're stuck with whether we like it or not. Some of them we like, and some of them we don't. God never asked our opinion; they're there regardless. God, the sovereign King of the universe, declared them. That's what they are. So be it.

In a free society like this one, we aren't accustomed to some dictator just declaring things and leaving you without a voice in the matter. We don't have a voice in it. We're eternal. There's a judgment day. We need to submit to the right things. I'm glad, but it's more than just a "yay, yay, yay!" It's a "wow." There's no way out. Americans aren't used to those kinds of ultimatums. If we don't like it, we either throw a tantrum or vote the guy out.

It doesn't work that way when you're dealing with the Father. "Let's take a vote and pick judgment day. Let's not show up, all of us. Let Him stand there all by Himself and see what He thinks about that."

No. It doesn't work that way. We have rallies and unions. It makes no difference.

A MAN'S ENEMIES WILL BE THE MEMBERS OF HIS OWN HOUSEHOLD

"Don't think I came to bring peace" (Mt. 10:34, paraphrased). He did come to bring peace between righteous men, but not between the unwilling. Conflict will occur when your anointing increases. Many of you have had a conflict due to your anointing, due to your stand for righteousness. Don't have conflict because of lack of wisdom, whatever you do. Mother will be against daughter and everyone against each other (v. 35). A man's enemies will be the members of his own household. Remember that. Don't be surprised when people in your household aren't getting blessed by what you're doing. I mean that. A man's enemies will be the members of his own family. That's life.

"HE WHO LOVES FATHER OR MOTHER MORE THAN ME IS NOT WORTHY OF ME"

"He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me" (Mt. 10:37).

Here's what it means. If you love your father more than you love Jesus, then when your father goes to hell, Jesus will see to it personally that you get to be with your father. You'll be with the one you love the most. "If you love him more than Me, then you'll go where he goes."

Those are sovereign edicts. You think, "Ahhh!"

We're not worthy of Jesus Christ with all that He did for us if we submit to human pressure rather than to Him. We haven't caught the vision of what it is about yet and we aren't worthy of His glory. There's no charismatic way to dodge these verses.

He goes on to talk about receiving a righteous man, etc. etc. and you get his blessing. We have to be really careful to do that.

Let's go to page four. Mark 6. Matthew 10 is really for the brothers and sisters who are serious about the higher life in power. I don't think it's terrible not to be serious about that stuff; I just think we really have to count the cost.

WE ATTACK DEMONIC FORCES BY HAVING A STRONG LIFE IN PRAYER

Mark 6. Herod. I want to say this one point about verse 18. John had been saying to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife" (Mk. 6:18). It was unlawful according to the law of Moses. Herod was a half-Jew, but he identified publicly as a Jew. Herod publicly took a stand as a Jew although he was only a half-Jew by blood. This is why John spoke against him. John wasn't speaking against Caesar and his immorality, nor against Herod as a political sinner, but against Herod as a fellow Jew. Do you understand that? John was a moral reformer, not a political reformer.

Don't make the mistake so many make by thinking of John as a political former because he rebuked Herod. A lot of people think he attacked the government. He couldn't have cared less. He was attacking an adulterous Jew. We read this about John coming against Herod and we start prophesying against presidents. We think, "Jeremiah did it!" He did it against Jewish people for religious reasons. He didn't go to other nations of the world and point them out because they weren't of the covenant people of God. These were men under covenant with God he was railing against. Let's be sure that we don't become political activists on the basis of this. If God tells you to do that, that's your own business. A lot people have taken this and missed it.

Let's be really careful. This is my personal point of view; this isn't the point of view of the Church, *per se*. I think the devil gets a lot of people busy doing a whole lot of things that aren't going to affect light and dark in the name of morality and nations. Their prayer life goes to zilch. Their anointing goes to zilch. Their anointing to cause men to desire righteousness goes to zilch. They're attacking the orange juice lady on homosexuality and have totally wiped out their spiritual life in the process. I feel like our real goal is to attack demonic forces by having a strong life in prayer. I'm not saying that's all wrong; I'm just saying that personally I get leery of people spending all their attention lobbying and ticketing shows. Time is so essential. I can't imagine spending all my energy doing those kinds of things. Sinners are going to be sinners. I'm not worried about homosexuals being homosexuals. I'm worried about them getting saved. If they get saved, they won't be homosexuals.

"COME AWAY BY YOURSELVES TO A SECLUDED PLACE AND REST"

He said to the disciples, "Come away by yourselves to a secluded place and rest a while" (Mk. 6:31). Rest is essential. It's wise to rest. Psalm 127 says it is vain to go to bed late and to get up early (Ps. 127:2). Respect anointed ministry. Allow them to be alone and rest. Jesus thought it was necessary. That's His wisdom. Don't think yourself to be wiser or more zealous than Jesus. Some guys think they're wiser than Jesus or more zealous than He was. Jesus had to rest. They don't think they have to. Get alone with God. Rest, pray, relax.

In verse 33, it says they were running on foot. They were sprinting. No excuse can stop the man hungry for God. Imagine running five miles to the meeting tonight. They ran from one city to another city. They ran there. I don't have a car today. They ran. They didn't walk; they didn't hitchhike. They ran the whole way. That's heavy! Imagine people running to the meeting because their car broke down.

COMPASSION IS WHAT ACTIVATES THE FAITH THAT RELEASES HEALING

Verse 34. He saw a great multitude, and He again felt compassion. This is the second time He has compassion on the multitude. It's a separate event. Why does He feel this? Because they were like sheep without shepherds. Then He healed the sick (Mt. 14:14). This compassion is what always activates faith that releases healing. It's not a desire to be a big man, but compassion for hurting people. You can fake yourself out from now until the end; you'll never have faith until you get compassion. Jesus has the same compassion for the sick that He had then. He never changes. If He had it then, He has it now. He felt compassion. He had emotions. His heart said, "Ahhh!" That's the heart of the Father that looks down and says, "Ahhh!"

Might there be a worker who will ascend and go up high into that consecrated life to deliver people? God the Father's heart is melting towards people who are afflicted.

UNBELIEF AND ADULTERY ARE BOTH DISHONORING TO GOD

Verse 52. He has fed the 5,000. They were all hungry; He felt compassion and fed them. He prayed all night. He walked on the sea. He's walking on the sea. They get all afraid. He says, "Don't be afraid." He got into the boat. Verse 51. The winds stopped. They were greatly astonished. They hadn't gained any insight from the insight of the loaves.

Jesus says, "I have power over natural elements, as you saw yesterday afternoon at the picnic. Everyone forgot to bring food. I have power over natural elements."

The hearts of the twelve were hardened. They didn't have belief in their hearts. Jesus called that a hardened heart. In Mark 8, it's called unbelief (Mk. 8:17). I think we need a revelation that unbelief is as dishonoring to God as adultery. They weren't living in adultery; they weren't stealing. They had hardened hearts. They looked at Him and were shaken because they were about to drown. He said, "Your hearts are hard."

"WHOEVER EATS MY FLESH AND DRINKS MY BLOOD WILL NEVER DIE"

Transition thirty-two. This is all John 6. Let's skip it and go right to Mark 7. It's good stuff, but it's pretty easy.

Let me make one comment on that. John 6 is the "Bread of Life" passage. Most people when they read that chapter get lost on the word *eternal*. When He says, "You will gain eternal life," I think of divine life, that creative force that God gives us. I think so much of Romans 2:8, the law of the spirit of life. It just happens to be an eternal thing. He's telling them they can receive the divine life; they can be recipients of the high power of God in their spirit. That's what He's offering them right there: to become one spirit and receive the divine life.

So many people get hung up on this passage, because they're thinking of the eternal city. He wasn't talking about the eternal city nearly so much as having God dwell inside of them after the day of Pentecost.

THE DANGER OF TEACHING AS DOCTRINE THE COMMANDMENTS OF MEN

Mark 7. Here's the tradition of the elders; they come against the Word of God, and Jesus says this in verses 6-8. "This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.' For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men—the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do" (Mk. 7:6-8).

They're getting up and teaching, "You have to wear this; you have to wear that. This is how things are!" They're preaching doctrines of men instead of telling people how to get free from the power of sin. That was the characteristic of the church. The day we start talking about spending a lot of time on all that kind of stuff, we're missing it. We're neglecting the commandment of God.

YOU CAN'T KEEP MOVING FORWARD UNLESS YOU STAY FRESH

He told them, "You hold to the tradition of men and neglect the commandment of God" (Mk. 7:9, paraphrased). In other words, "You nicely set aside God's Word in order to keep your condition." They insist upon men's tradition and they equate it to the Word of God by giving them the same authority. They got so mixed up; they started thinking that a style of dressing was the same thing as walking in the Spirit: so much so that they insisted on it with the same fervor and zeal with which they insisted on people walking right with God. They mixed the whole thing up and it got out of perspective.

The thing that scares me is that that's the natural tendency in man's heart. It's easier just to relax and settle in than to stay fresh all the time. Because you can't keep moving forward unless you stay fresh: unless you keep sin out of your life, unless you keep watering and weeding. It takes a discipline and a pressing to stay fresh. It's easier to kick back and let your devotional life get weak, and just pick a few rules and live by those. It takes a lot more to keep you on your toes to stay in the Spirit.

There's change coming all the time in the Spirit. It's a real tendency that everyone has. Don't think we're going to get away with it. We have to stay fresh or we'll start coming up with rules. "You have to have good guitar players in worship!" It's different in every generation. Some people discourage the wearing of slacks and earrings and all that stuff. For the charismatics, it will be different; we just don't know what it is yet. "You have to have prayer baskets!" Things like that. I know they're right in front of us; we just don't see them yet. I'm getting really nervous that we don't submit to them. I think we were flirting with one with respect to our prophecy room. We got close, but I don't think we embraced it. We have to be really, really careful all the time or we'll start insisting on our way as though it were the same thing as the Word of God, with the same measure of authority.

Jesus gives an example in verse 10. Moses told them to honor their father and mother, and anyone who spoke evil of father or mother would be killed.

"My father is a jerk!"

"Stone the guy!"

He was giving them an example. This is tricky. He says, "Here's what you tell people when you get up and teach on Sunday morning. A man says to his father and mother, 'Anything that I had that you might have been helped with financially is *corben*.' That means, 'I'm sorry, I've given it to God. I was going to give it to you,

but I have to give it to the church.’ You no longer permit that man to do anything for his father and his mother. Thus you invalidate the Word of God by your tradition which you’ve handed down. You do many such things like that” (Mk. 7:10-13, paraphrased).

Paul tells us that anyone who doesn’t provide for his own household is worse than an unbeliever. He’s talking about taking care of your father and mother when they’re older, much more than losing a job. I imagine a guy who’s twenty-five years old, and he just lost his job. He reads the verse and says, “I’m worse than an unbeliever!” There might be some truth to it if the guy is a lazy bum. But here’s the point Jesus was making: when your mom gets to be eighty, take care of her or you’re worse than an unbeliever. That’s the point. That’s the heart of God. We have to take care of our parents, if there’s any way possible. It’s our responsibility. We aren’t to be guilty by that.

I think a lot of parents can manipulate their children under false guilt. You just need wisdom from God. This guy was tithing and he had a little extra offering. The Pharisees said, “Give that offering to the church.”

“If I do, my mom has missed eating two days in a row. She’s eighty and she isn’t in very good health.”

“Ah, put it in. It will be given to God.”

He puts it in the offering. The man puts it in his pocket and goes home to his wife.

“How was the offering today?”

“It was good. There was this little guy, his mother probably won’t live through the week, but I got his money!”

His mother was starving and he wanted more money out of him. Jesus says, “Boy, you missed it totally, and you convinced the poor man he was giving it to God. He was giving it to you.”

That’s what He’s talking about here. This can be really tricky when we get into finances. I’m big on giving. I feel like it’s a way to release righteousness, grace, and the Spirit of God. We all need to be big givers. At the same time, as an eldership, we want to be careful we aren’t getting tricky. We need to be really legitimate, right down the line. One of those days, we’re going to gaze into those eyes of fire, the Lord Jesus. It’s not going to be worth pulling any tricks: “Oh Lord, it’s all there in the book...” That’s not a funny thing.

THAT WHICH COMES FROM THE HEART IS WHAT DEFILES A MAN

He goes down and tells them another thing. They said what they ate would defile them. He says, “It’s not what you eat, but what comes out of your heart” (Mk. 7:23, paraphrased). This is one of my favorite verses. You have to do more than make a decision to have strong faith. You need victory in these things. You make a quality decision; then you walk in faith. Later you attain to it. There’s an attaining that’s necessary if you want to remove all the defilement.

Your faith rises strongly. This isn’t just the man with a blameless heart that makes a decision to get rid of these; it’s the man who’s attained. The day you make a decision, you have a blameless heart before God, even if you don’t attain to it for a while. You still have a blameless heart. Those things in your life will still defile you, even though your heart is right. These are the reasons we’re failing in obedience. This is the reason our faith isn’t

growing. This is the reason the power of God isn't moving. Deceit! Man, that's the trickiest one. Deceit will keep us from moving in miracle-working power. It's trickiness and deceit deep in our hearts.

JESUS ENCOUNTERS A SYRO-PHOENICIAN WOMAN WITH GREAT FAITH

Now we come to the story of the Syro-Phoenician woman. This is fantastic! This woman has no business going to Jesus. She's not a Jew.

Matthew 15 is by far the best account of this. I'll just tell you the story. Here's what happens. The woman comes up to Jesus and says, "Heal my daughter. She is truly demon-possessed."

Matthew 15 says that Jesus stared at her and He wouldn't even answer her. She's screaming fanatically. He wouldn't answer her a word. Seemingly, He totally ignored her. Then she says, "Heal my daughter, heal my daughter, heal my daughter!"

He looks at her and says, "No, I have only come to the house of Israel."

He seemingly rejects her. She comes back. God Himself seems to be rejecting her. She comes back and says, "Heal my daughter!"

He says, "Aren't you a Gentile? We don't give food to the dogs." He insults her.

She says, "That's OK; I'll eat the crumbs!"

What a perfect spirit. God appeared to have insulted and rejected her. She refused to be denied. She said, "I've seen what You've done and I'm staying here until it happens."

God said these things to her. It's not like circumstances said it; God said it to her with His own mouth. She wouldn't be denied. She said, "It makes no difference. I'll eat crumbs. I'll mop the floor."

Jesus looks at her and says, "You have fantastic faith" (Mt. 15:28, paraphrased). I'm convinced God had it in His heart to give it to her. I'm convinced that the day Jesus laid eyes on her He thought, "Praise the Lord. After that boat ride with the boys, this is going to be an encouragement to see someone with faith. Here she is, praise the Lord."

I don't think He was playing a trick on her, but He knew the intensity in her heart. He drew that out of her as an example for all of us. Because if He had just healed her and we met her in the eternal city and found she was a woman of unshakable faith, she wouldn't be any good to us right now. We think, "My, that's neat." I think Jesus, by those responses, drew that out so that what was in her, we could profit by 2,000 years later. So that we could say, "That woman didn't even know her Bible. But she wouldn't be denied." So that it excited our hearts to a greater walk with God. He tells her it's because of her faith. She had great faith. She got the answer.

YOU BECOME RESPONSIBLE FOR THE REVELATION THAT GOD GIVES YOU

Mark 8. Once again, He feels compassion. He feels compassion every time He turns around. Remember, we're putting this thing in order. Every time He feels it again, it's not the same story in a different gospel; it's a

different event. Sometimes we read all the Gospels and you don't know if you're reading the same story twice. Every time I'm telling you this, it's a different event.

Now He feeds the 4,000 right there on the spot. He's revealed it to them twice. Now after Jesus reveals light to people; what happens once God has given you revelation of something? You become automatically responsible from that day forward. He makes food again. He says, "OK boys, remember the boat? Remember the food in the picnic we had before? This is the second one. Now I'm saying something. Are you getting it? I'm generous, willing, and able. You got it?"

"Yes Lord, we got it."

"Now I've revealed it. You're responsible for that now."

He goes down and here they go, verse 14. They had forgotten to take bread. They're getting back into the boat. I would be leery of those boat sermons. Verse 16. They begin to discuss the fact that they didn't have any bread. Jesus is aware of this and said to them, "Why do you discuss the fact that you have no bread?" I have a feeling He wasn't blessed. I mean that. He asked them five very piercing questions. I think it would be very good to ask ourselves often. "Do you not see or understand? Is it that you have a hardened heart? Are you slow of hearing? You don't remember well" (Mk. 8:17-18). He isn't happy at all. I mean, it's a miraculous thing. All it is, is legitimately in the boat. They don't have bread and they're hungry.

"Hey, what's the big deal?"

"The big deal is this: twice I've revealed it to you, without rebuking you, that I make bread. The first two times, there was no problem because you didn't know it. It's not a blessing anymore that you're all freaked out about this stuff."

"HAVING EYES, DO YOU NOT SEE? HAVING EARS, DO YOU NOT HEAR?"

Verse 18, He quotes the prophecy to them that four months earlier He quoted to the scribes and Pharisees who had a hardened heart. He looked at the twelve in the boat. I bet it got deadly silent. "Having eyes, do you not see? And having ears, do you not hear" (Mk. 8:18)?

They must have thought, "Ay, yi yi! What is He saying?"

He asked them about their hardened hearts. "I broke the five loaves and fed the 5,000. How many baskets did you take up?"

"Twelve."

"I broke the seven for the 4,000, and how many baskets did you take up?"

"Seven."

"Do you not understand yet?"

He was rebuking them, not asking them a sincere question.

“Brethren, I’ve revealed it and you’re responsible now. If you’re going to be the apostles on which the Church is built, you had better get with the program.”

There’s a day and an hour after God has spoken continually about promises, when it’s no longer cute for us not to respect them. Maybe the first six months. There comes a day when God requires belief and faith. Cynicism, skepticism, those things don’t work after you’re not a babe anymore. Does everyone have the heartbeat of this? It’s important to lay hold of this. I think there’s so much unbelief in the Church that’s really dishonoring to God. After we’ve been given some revelation, it’s easier just to kick back. It hasn’t dawned on us that unbelief is dishonoring. We’ve had about six or seven examples where faith released it. I think we really need to catch this thing.

MOSES AND ELIJAH APPEAR ON THE MOUNT OF TRANSFIGURATION

Let’s go to page seven. Mark 9. Elijah and Moses appear on the Mount of Transfiguration. Moses spoke and represented the law of God. Elijah was the mightiest prophet. Before those three apostles stood the Law and the Prophets testifying of Jesus Christ. In the day to come, when the dark hour was upon them, they needed to know that they know that they know that it was the Word of God Jesus was fulfilling.

God says, “Why don’t we just bring the Law and the Prophets in person to tell them?”

They came back. The Law and the Prophets embodied in Moses and Elijah appeared. It says they were discussing with Jesus His departure that was soon to come. Those men got to hear with their own ears what the Law and the Prophets had to say in person.

Jesus said, “Remember this experience. The dark hour is coming and you’ll need to know that I’m the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets. You’ve heard them speak now.”

“ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE TO HIM WHO BELIEVES”

In verse 14, He comes off the mountain. Immediately a crowd comes together. He sees the disciples and scribes arguing. He asked them what they were discussing.

One in the crowd said, “Teacher, I brought You my son, who has a mute spirit. And wherever it seizes him, it throws him down; he foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth, and becomes rigid. So I spoke to Your disciples, that they should cast it out, but they could not” (Mk. 9:17-18).

Jesus says, “O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you” (Mk. 9:19)?

Jesus looked at the guy. Immediately the spirit threw him down, with convulsions, foaming, fire, water, etc.

The man said in verse 23, “If You can . . . take pity” (Mk. 9:23, NASB).

Jesus said, “What was that again? All things are possible to him who believes” (Mk. 9:24, paraphrased). I think this lesson somehow squeezed all the faith stuff into one session. I think He was teaching them something.

Their day was coming to an end. The voice of the father said, “I do believe.” Jesus rebuked the spirit and told him never to enter the man again. He came out.

AS YOUR EXPECTANCY GROWS, YOUR POWER WILL INCREASE

In verse 28, Jesus came into the house. His disciples asked Him, “Why couldn’t we cast it out?” That’s the \$64,000 question. “Why doesn’t it work?”

Jesus gives a fuller answer in Matthew 17. He says to them, “Because of the littleness of your faith; for truly I say to you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you. But this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting” (Mt. 17:20-21, NASB). Eventually, as your expectancy grows, you’ll say to the mountain, “Move!” and it will move.

But mature faith that enables you to cast out demons at this level only comes from huge amounts of time spent in God’s presence, and in prayer and fasting. You’re never going to develop faith to cast these high-level demons out of people unless you’re a man or woman of prayer and fasting. Revelation knowledge of God comes from being in God’s presence. You’ll never have faith to deliver men of serious affliction without being serious in your faith.

It seems like a pretty legalistic answer: “How come no one is getting healed?”

“No one is praying and fasting, therefore their faith isn’t high enough.”

“Jesus, that’s legalistic.”

The problem is that it’s a true answer. Faith and obedience at a deeper level is the key to power being released at a higher level. Prayer and fasting. Fasting lifts your spirit in an ability to hear of God and to receive revelation from God. Amen.

MINISTRY TIME

A. All of them there saw Him do it many times. They could have pointed at the twelve. He could have pointed at them too and said, “Wait a second”— they and the Jewish exorcists in that day.

Jesus had announced the day of the Lord was there and that salvation had come. God had visited His people. Probably the twelve, but the crowd couldn’t get off the hook either.

Here’s the key. Only because He had done so many before that day are they responsible for that. He just cast the devils out of that Gadarene man a couple of months earlier. This was a famously demon-possessed man, famous throughout all Palestine. They all saw Him do it. They knew the goods were there. They came to this second most famous Man and He said, “You ought to know you can do this stuff.”

Maybe they were a little weak on their prayer life. Maybe they were arguing while the three big guys were up on the mountain getting revelation, in anger and strife. It’s hard to say. God bless you.